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El Salvador Murders Linked to Far-Left 'CounterSpy'

The murders of two American officials of the AFL-CIO's American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) in El Salvador after one of them was linked to the CIA, and Moscow's exploitation of their deaths for propaganda purposes in Latin America, may trigger new efforts on Capitol Hill to pass legislation that would make it a crime to endanger the lives of Americans abroad by identifying them as CIA agents.

The anti-CIA publication *CounterSpy*, which revealed the identity of the CIA station chief in Greece, Richard Welch, before his assassination in 1975, published two articles on El Salvador—one attacking the AIFLD as a CIA front and the other attacking AIFLD official Mike Hammer and Salvadoran peasant leader Rodolfo Viera—shortly before Hammer, Viera and the other American AIFLD official, Mark Pearlman, were murdered in that country in early January.

The AIFLD has long been a target of Philip Agee, the CIA defector who has collaborated with the Communists in their efforts to destroy the agency. Agee, who smeared the AIFLD as a CIA front in his book, "On Company Business," was a member of the advisory board of the Organizing Committee for a Fifth Estate (OC-5), which published *CounterSpy* in 1976. OC-5's subversive operations were the subject of an investigation by a subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee in that same year.

The hearings disclosed that one of OC-5's objectives was to agitate against organizations such as the AIFLD that were combatting Communist domination of labor unions. One of the slain Americans, Mike Hammer, was a strong anti-Communist who believed that the land reform program, run in part by the AIFLD, would weaken support for the Communists.

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issue of *CounterSpy* carried two vicious attacks on the AIFLD. The author of one article, Frank Arnold, charged that the CIA and the AIFLD had worked together to overthrow the Marxist Allende regime in Chile. Arnold noted that the AIFLD-CIA connection was raised on the recent Public Television series, "On Company Business," which starred Agee. In another publication, Arnold recently criticized the AIFLD program in Nicaragua, saying that it was "small but a potential danger" to the Marxist Sandinistas. That article appeared in the *Daily World*, the newspaper of the Communist Party, U.S.A.

The other *CounterSpy* article called on the AFL-CIO to end its involvement with the AIFLD. The article included personal attacks on Viera and Hammer and praise for the Revolutionary Democratic Front, the Communist-backed terrorist group in El Salvador that is known to murder peasants who cooperate with the land reform program. The author of the article, Richard Hobbs, quoted from a report issued by the Ecumenical Program for Inter-American Action (EPICA), which claimed that the peasant union once headed by Viera and supported by AIFLD was aligned with the right-wing terrorist group ORDEN. The director of EPICA, Rev. Phillip Wheaton, served with Agee on the advisory board of OC-5.

Hobbs also claimed that University of Wisconsin Prof. John Strasma, who in 1977 investigated the financial affairs of the peasant union, found that Viera had "pocketed" some of the land reform money and that Mike Hammer "did nothing about it." Hobbs went on to question Viera's honesty and Hammer's association with him. However, Prof. Strasma stated in a recent inter-

Viera as a respected, charismatic leader who was well-liked by the peasants.

Shortly before *CounterSpy*'s blast at Hammer and Viera, it published what it called a list of "CIA cops in El Salvador," which purportedly identified about 75 Salvadoran police officers who had undergone "CIA-directed training" in the U.S. It isn't known how many of these Salvadorans were killed by terrorists as a result of the *CounterSpy* article.

The damage done by *CounterSpy* was compounded when Solicitor General Wade McCree, while arguing before the Supreme Court for U.S. authority to revoke Phillip Agee's passport, made a reference to Hammer and Pearlman being "under cover" in El Salvador. This comment was publicized by the *New York Times*, even though McCree said he was speaking hypothetically.

Radio Moscow, in broadcasts beamed to Latin America, publicized the McCree statement, calling it an official admission that the CIA was intervening in Latin America. Moscow said the two Americans were "spies," and said that Washington was lifting restrictions on CIA espionage, political assassination and "other dirty tricks" in the area. Radio Moscow charged that the U.S. was preparing to militarily intervene in El Salvador.

Intelligence sources, as well as the AIFLD and the State Department, deny that Hammer and Pearlman were CIA operatives. Moreover, they note that Wade McCree wouldn't have known if they had been. They say the murders of the AIFLD officials demonstrate the need for a provision in the agents' identities bill before Congress that would make it a crime to endanger the lives of Americans abroad by falsely identifying them as CIA agents. Rep. John Ashbrook (R-Ohio), a member of the House Intelligence Committee, is pushing for such a